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United Nations reform: measures and proposals

A new concept of trusteeship

Note by the Secretary-General

1. In paragraph 85 of his report entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform" (A/51/950), the Secretary-General proposed that the Trusteeship Council be reconstituted as the forum through which Member States exercise their collective trusteeship for the integrity of the global environment and common areas such as the oceans, atmosphere and outer space, and that the Trusteeship Council serve to link the United Nations and civil society in addressing those areas of global concern, which require the active contribution of public, private and voluntary sectors.

2. Over the years, it has become increasingly evident that issues relating to the integrity of the global environment and such common areas as oceans, atmosphere and outer space have a direct bearing on the future of all mankind. It is also evident that those issues need to be understood and addressed in a strategic and long-term perspective, bearing in mind their interrelationships. While a number of intergovernmental bodies and legal instruments have been put in place, especially following the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, to address sustainable development and various aspects of the global environment and common areas, there is no high-level deliberative forum that could take a comprehensive, strategic and long-term view of global trends and provide policy guidance in those areas to the world community. A new high-level council with a well-defined mandate, that does not create overlaps or conflicts with existing intergovernmental bodies, could serve this purpose.

3. The present note is limited in scope as the Secretary-General, in line with action 12 of his report (A/51/950), has set up a Task Force to prepare proposals on environmental and human settlement areas. The Task Force will be chaired by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme and will include several eminent persons, including prominent representatives of civil society. The Task Force will have an opportunity to elaborate further on the Secretary-General's proposals for a new concept of trusteeship, as its terms of reference include, *inter alia*, the preparation of proposals, for consideration by the Secretary-General and subsequent submission to the General Assembly, on reforming

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and strengthening United Nations activities in the environmental and human settlement areas. Based on the work of the Task Force, it is envisaged that the proposal will be reviewed by the General Assembly at a later date.